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THE OBSERVATOR.

Remarks on the Fight betwixt the Engliſh *and* French *Fleets. Remarks on the Liſt of* French *Privateers put to Sea, and ready to Sail.*

From **Saturday** September the 16th, to **Wednesday** September the 20th, 1704.

Country-m. WELL, Maſter *Obſervator*, I ſee you have look'd over the Papers that give an Account of the Sea Fighting-Story; I'll aſſure you, ſome People at *London* ſay 'tis the ſharpeſt Engagement that ever was ſeen.

Obſ. It was a ſharp Engagement with ſome of our Ships, that's certain, for they Shot away all their Powder; but I ſhan't determine the Point whether it was the ſharpeſt Engagement that ever was ſeen; I leave that to the Honeſt Sailors that were in the *Sole-Bay* Engagement, and the Fight at *La Hogue*, where we had 14 of the Enemies three Deck't Ships deſtroy'd by our Brave Tars. But the Account of the Ships we have taken and deſtroy'd in this Engagement is not yet come to Hand, and we don't know yet whether the *French* are beaten out of the *Mediteranean*, which would be the beſt Effect of this Battel.

Country-m. Why, what's the matter? You ſeem to make Scruples.

Obſ. Not I, nor will I Examine into the Merits of the Cauſe; I am ſure Ships can't Fight without Powder; nor was I to ſupply them with Powder; nor did I Shoot away their Powder to no purpoſe; if a Parliament Examines into this Affair I ſhall never be Queſtion'd. If we have got a Compleat Victory, if we have beaten the *French* out of the *Mediteranean*, or deſtroy'd their Ships there, I ſhall, like an Honeſt *Engliſh* Man, thank God and our Commanders; but by the Accounts I can't ſay and affirm that this is the ſharpeſt Engagement that ever was ſeen. I have Read too much of the Valour of our Anceſtors; I have known too much of our Actions at Sea in my Time, than to ſay *Amen* to that Poſition, that this is the ſharpeſt Engagement that ever was ſeen: Ever is a long Time, even from the Beginning of the World to this very Day.

Country-m. Well, Sir, we won't diſpute this Point. But don't you think 'tis a Compleat Victory?

Obſ. I don't know any Occaſion I have to tell you my Thoughts.

Country-m. You are very Cruſty; Pray be a little free with me.

Obſ. The Government ſays 'tis a Victory, and I never us'd to depend upon other Accounts than what are Publiſh'd by the Government. Here's the Account of the Fight, Printed in the *Flying-Poſt*, ſays, *That both Fleets gave over Firing as if by Conſent.* Then, pray, who were Victors? I tell thee you and I have nothing to do to Examine into the Merits of the Cauſe; leave that to the Parliament. But be it as it will I am glad of the Engagement, we can hold it longer than the *French*; and now we have a great many freſh Men that are Enter'd the Liſts of War, that never Fought before.

Country-m. Then they muſt pay Beveridge: But we have a great Loſs in Sir —— *Lake*, he's Kill'd.

Obſ. That's pity; he leap'd Over-board at *Vigo* and by that means ſav'd his Life, while his Surgeon and a few Scroby Fellows ſav'd his Ship, and then he came Aboard again like a Man.

Country-m. Scroby Fellows de'ye call thoſe that ſaved the Ship, I think they were Brave Fellows, and ought to be well Rewarded.

Obſ. It's no matter for that the poor Surgeon, not long ago, had not got Reward enough for that piece of Bravery to Buy him a Plaiſter-Box.

Country-m. But, Maſter *Obſervator*, I would fain have ——

Obſ. Thou ſhan't have one Word more of me concerning this Victory. It is enough that we have a Victory; be ſatisfy'd and Prate no more of it.

Country-m. Will you let me ſee the Letters you have in your Hand?

Obſ. No, I won't: Call another Cauſe.

Country-m. Maſter *Obſervator*, I have a Caſe of Conſcience to put to you, will you Reſolve me?

Obſ. Ay, if I can. What is it?

Country-m. Am I bound to believe all the News that is Publiſhed by Authory?

Obſ. Thou art Perniciouſly bent; I'll anſwer this Queſtion by a Story, *When the Duke of* Monmouth *was in Arms in the* Weſt *againſt King* James, *there was an Account on the* Gazette *of that Duke's being entirely Routed at* Phillips-Norton, *when indeed King* James's *Forces were beaten at that Place. This Account being Read at a Coffee-Houſe, a Citizen preſent, ſaid,* He would not believe it; *upon which a Red hot Loyaliſt ſeized the Perſon for no leſs than High Treaſon, and carried him before Sir* William Turner, *one of the beſt Magiſtrates that ever was known in the City for Impartial Juſtice. The Citizen was Accuſed of ſaying,* He would not believe the Kings Gazette; *ſays Sir* William, Did you ſay Friend, that you would not believe the Kings Gazette? Yes, *ſays the Citizen*, I did ſo; *Sir* William *continues*, And won't you believe the Kings Gazette? No, *ſays the Citizen*, I won't believe it. *Sir* William *breaking out into a great Paſſion*, ſays, Sirrah, the Gazette is Read ſeverval Times in Council before it is Printed; and won't you believe a Paper that has ſuch Authority, and the Royal *Imprimatur*? No, *ſays the Citizen*, I won't believe it. Then, *ſays Sir* William, Get thee about thy Buſineſs like a croſs Fellow as thou art; if thou wilt not believe it, I don't know how to make thee.

Now I believe my ſhare of all the Publick News, and ſo I do of this Account: But I can never believe it was the ſharpeſt Engagement that ever was ſeen.

We muſt conſider too how much of a Party there is in theſe Relations. Our Publick Prints, ſince our Fleet went to Sea, have given us, by

Times,

Times, an Account of above 150 Ships of War, taken by our Fleet. Now I can't believe that 150 Ships can be taken out of 49 that's certain.

Country-m. But that's certain there never was a ſharper Engagement with a ſingle Ship than with the *Engliſh* Admirals, which had three *French* Men of War upon her at one Time.

Obſ. Where were the Admirals two Seconds at that Time? They us'd to Fight in a Line of Battel with their Boltſpits over the others Taffrills. But if ſo, a ſharper Engagement has been known. The *Engliſh Kings-Fiſher*, a Fourth Rate Man of War, and not ſo good as our Fourth Rates are now a-Days, Engaged the Grand *Canary* and Six other *Turks* Men of War in the *Streights*; ſhe Fought theſe Seven Men of War ſo ſharply that ſhe ſunk ſome of 'em, and after having been Boarded, and having cleared her ſelf ſeveral Times, her Quarter took Fire and was Burnt down, ſo that ſhe lay Pluſh *Fore* and *Aft*, and yet clear'd her ſelf and came into Port, having ſcarce one Sound Man on Board her. This was a ſharp Engagement. I have a good Mind to Write an Account of ſome Sea Engagements, to let my Countrymen know what a ſharp Engagement is.

Country-m. Maſter *Obſervator*, now you have dipt your Pen in Salt Water, will you be pleaſed to give me your thoughts on this Liſt of the *French Privateers*, lately put to Sea, and ready to Sail from ſeveral of the *French Ports*?

Obſ. I had this Liſt by the laſt Poſt, but durſt not Print it, for fear I ſhould be accuſed of putting her Majeſties Merchants into Bodily fear; but ſince ſome Body or other has done it to my hand, I hope I ſhall incur no Premunire by giving my thoughts thereon.

Country-m. No, no, 'tis Publick, and upon my Country Word you may venture on any thing that is Publick. But, Maſter, this thing ſtaggers me; here are upwards of 100 Privateers, and many of them from 50 to 60 Guns; where can the *French* get Men enough to Man theſe Ships?

Obſ. This ſeems an Impoſſibility at firſt ſight, conſidering the great Numbers of Men on Board the *French* Ships and Gallies in the *Mediteranean*. But you muſt not believe theſe Privateers are Mann'd all with Sailors, they carry but one half or one third Sailors, and the reſt are Landmen, who, in two or three years time, become Sailors; and thus the Privateers are made a Nurſery for the Navy, which ſeldom or never wants Men.

Country-m. And why don't we fit out Privateers, and recruit our Navy with Seamen after the ſame manner?

Obſ. That we ſhould do, were we on the ſame Foot of Advantage with the *French* Privateers.

Country-m. Nay, if our Sword be ſhorter than theirs, we ſhall never Fight 'em well. But, wherein is the Difference of Advantage?

Obſ. If an *Engliſh* Privateer takes a Ship, and brings her into Port, ſuppoſe at *Plimouth*, or any of the Harbours towards the Lands end; they muſt come up to *London*, and get her Condemn'd in the Admiralty Court at *Doctors-Commons*, and after they have paid the Perquiſites of the Lord High Admiral, and the Charge of Condemnation, they had as good have ſtaid at Home.

Now what the *French* Privateers get is their own; the *Count de Tholouſe*, Lord High Admiral of *France*, has quitted them his Perquiſites. When they have taken a Ship, they don't run to *Paris*, or a great way to get her Condemn'd; they have Courts of Admiralty in all their Principal Ports, ſo that in five or ſix days time, they can Condemn a Ship, Sell her Cargo, and Refit to Sea.

Country-m. This is a great Encouragement indeed, and why don't we do the like?

Obſ. I have Written much on this Subject, and when the Privateer Bill was before the Parliament, I made what Intereſt I could among the Members to get the ſame Allowance of Profit to *Engliſh* Privateers, as Foreigners gave to thoſe of their own Country, but could by no means get it.

Country-m. Well, but theſe Privateers will make a ſad rattle among our Merchant Men.

Obſ. Our Merchants muſt Trade and Sail with the greater Caution. But upon the return of the Fleet, we ſhall not want Men, and we never want Frigats ſufficient to check the Inſolence of the *French* Privateers in the Channel; if they are ſo Numerous, as reported, our Winter Guard muſt be ſo much the ſtronger. And ſo much for Sea Stories.

Country-m. Come, Maſter *Obſervator*, here's a good Health to all the Sea Commanders in General, that Fought Bravely in the *Streights*, and if you can fill up your Blank do it.

Obſ. I'll Pledge thee, with all my Heart, and will conſider of filling up my Blank upon the Arrival of the Lame-Poſt, and ſo good Night *Roger*.

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This Day is Publiſhed.

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